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ABSTRACT

The word "like" has acquired some newly grammaticalized uses, notably those of a discourse marker and a quotative complementizer. Although these uses have been highly stigmatized by normativist grammarians, they nevertheless occur with high frequency in naturally-occurring discourse and have attracted the attention of several studies. This article tests the claims made in the literature about the use of "like" by looking at a small sample of talk-in-interaction. It undertakes a qualitative evaluation of pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic aspects in the use of "like" in its new functions and gives motivations for the grammaticalization it has undergone. Using the framework of Lakoff (1987), the synchronic uses of "like" are presented in a radical structure that explains the various semantic-pragmatic functions it can take with reference to a core meaning. It concludes that the boundaries of the different functions of "like" are very hard to determine, and its interpretation depends heavily upon the context. An appendix presents transcription conventions. (Contains 72 references and 34 notes.) (SM)

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AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF *LIKE*: ITS GRAMMATICALISATION IN CONVERSATIONAL AMERICAN ENGLISH AND BEYOND

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Abstract

Like has recently acquired some newly grammaticalized uses, notably those of a discourse marker and a quotative complementizer. Although these uses have been highly stigmatized by normativist grammarians, they nevertheless occur with high frequency in naturally occurring discourse and have attracted the attention of several studies. This article tests the claims made in the literature about the use of like *by looking at a small sample of talk-in-interaction. The author undertakes a qualitative evaluation of the pragmatic, semantic and syntactic aspects in the use of* like *in its new functions and gives motivations for the grammaticalization it has undergone. Using the framework of Lakoff (1987), the synchronic uses of* like *are presented in a radial structure that explains the various semantic-pragmatic functions it can take with reference to a core meaning.*

1. Introduction[1]

Like enjoys a range of usages. In spontaneous everyday discourse all uses of *like* co-occur, which results in clusters of *like* in different functions but also stretches of speech where there are hardly any occurrences of *like* to be found[2]. According to the literature, *like* in its non-standard uses is most frequently found in the colloquial, everyday discourse of adolescents and young adults[3], a fact that underlines its status as an item with newly grammaticalized functions. Also the repetitive occurrence and the reciprocal attraction of *like* in its multiple functions might be interpreted as a sign of grammaticalization underway (Romaine and Lange 1991).

The third edition of *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1994:783) mentions the following uses of *like* (not counting its use as an adjective, an adverb, a noun, a verb, and the obsolete and rare examples):

> A Preposition 'similar to, somewhat resembling, characteristic of, as for example'
> (1) She sings like a bird
>
> B Conjunction (coll.) 'in the way that, as, as if'
> (2) It was just like you said
>
> 'LIKE IS ALSO USED WITHOUT MEANING OR SYNTACTIC FUNCTION, AS IN CASUAL TALK, BEFORE OR AFTER A WORD, PHRASE, OR CLAUSE'

The *American Heritage College Dictionary* (1993:786) adds the following use:

- not standard: used to provide emphasis or a pause.

The Random House *Webster* (1999:768)[4] has just incorporated the new uses of *like* that I will focus on in this paper:

- informal (used esp. after forms of 'to be' to introduce reported speech or thought)

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(3) She's like "I don't believe it," and I'm like " No, it's true"

- informal (used preceding a WH-word, an answer to a question, or other information in a sentence on which a speaker wishes to focus attention).

(4) Like, why didn't you write to me ? The music was like really great.

Even though the selection of this item and its absolute frequency depends heavily on the idiolect of the speaker, its high frequency in oral discourse can be accounted for by its multifunctionality and, as I will show in this paper, by the functions here labelled 'not standard' or 'informal'.

I present a categorization of those instances of *like* that do not fall into the traditional categories, that is, tokens that show a great deal of syntactic freedom and possess a great mobility inside the utterance in the sense that they can precede or follow a clause or any phrase. Following Schiffrin (1987), such items can be analyzed as discourse markers[5] because they fall into the category of 'sequentially dependent elements, which bracket units of talk and which are *independent of sentential structure*' [emphasis mine]. Cf. also Sankoff et al. (1997:195): [discourse markers] 'do not enter into constructions syntactically with other elements of the sentence'.

At the same time I will examine the function of *like* as a quotative complementizer. I will then discuss these instances of *like* in the light of the claims made about them in the literature.

Romaine and Lange (1991) proposed a grammaticalization channel for *like* based on Traugott's (1982) model. They traced the diachronic development of *like* from a preposition to a conjunction to a discourse marker and to a quotative complement.

Figure 1: The semantic core model of *like*

preposition →	**conjunction** →	**discourse marker**[6]
prep/ _NP	conj/ _IP	DM/ _XP
He looks like my father people blocking you know	Winston tastes good like a cigarette should	They were like people blocking you know

↓

quotative complementizer

comp/ _XP

Maya's like "Kim come over here and be with ...."

Figure 1 shows that when *like* precedes a noun phrase, it is used as a preposition, and when it takes a sentential complement its function is that of a conjunction. If the material that *like* precedes is a direct quote, it serves as an introductory item to that quote, hence as a quotative complement[7]. As *like* already has a considerable amount of syntactic freedom, it is at the point where it can be reinterpreted as a discourse marker, which is syntactically entirely free. Note that it can also, in accordance with its use as a suffix (i.e. *animal-like*), follow whole chunks of discourse; this is more the British English usage of the item (Miller and Weinert 1995).

Originally, I intended to follow the grammaticalization channel model as proposed by Romaine and Lange (1991). But due to the fact that the newer uses of *like* have not supplanted the older ones and since their model does not fully show the semantic-pragmatic link between functions at different ends of the channel, I have instead tried to find a model that can account for the multifunctionality and the overlapping of *like*'s functions in synchrony.

I follow Lakoff's (1987) radial structure model, which is able to show a non-suppletive development of multi-layered meanings via metaphorical extension, as Meyerhoff and Niedelzki (1995, 1998) have exemplified in their discussion of a similar lexeme in Bislama, *olsem* (meaning 'be like'). In this paper I will show that synchronically the different functions of *like* have a strong link to a core meaning, namely that of comparison. Even though the existing functions are still more or less closely linked to this core meaning, one cannot postulate a single grammatical channel joining uses that are progressively more remote from this core. Rather, my claim is that - as can be supported by cross-linguistic evidence - they form a semantic field around this one core and can be linked with each other more or less closely. In this paper, I will show the synchronic functions of *like* as in my data, first its use as a discourse marker in its various functions in section 3, then in its use as a quotative complementizer in section 4. I will try to trace a model of how these functions are semantically and structurally linked in section 5.

2. The data

The present paper is a case study, based mainly on a recording made during a gathering of a New York family. The literature seems to agree that discourse markers and the quotative complementizer use of *like* are more a feature of colloquial spoken English. For Watts (1989:208) they are 'one of the most perceptually salient features of oral style'. I therefore chose a data sample of a family gathering, a setting that I considered to be the most apt for the recording of the naturally occurring production of an item such as *like* because the interlocutors have known each other for a long time and are involved in relatively close relationships. Stylistically refined discourse is not required.

The speakers are a college-age girl, a freshman transcribed as X in the following examples, and the main speaker throughout the tape recordings, her French exchange student (A), and three adults of her family (C.-K, M, and F) all of them in their late 40s or mid-50s[8]. The interaction was audio-taped and transcribed[9] in the mid-90s and I will base my results mainly on one 90-minute cassette.

3. *Like* in non-quotative function

Like is a discourse sensitive item with multiple functions and ambiguous scope. I will show that even though its different uses are often highly ambiguous and overlapping, and therefore hard to pin down, it is nevertheless not justified to claim that *like* can have all functions in all contexts. Rather, the function it assumes in a given utterance depends on the intra- and extralinguistic context. I will now illustrate this claim and show in what way *like*'s multiple uses are interrelated and how they can be tied to one core meaning.

3.1 From the comparative meaning to a hedge

Like as a preposition or as a conjunction has a clearly comparative function with identity between the compared and the comparator. In talk-in-interaction, speakers use *like* when there is even a slight difference between the two entities compared. Thus Schourup (1982a: 30) proposes a 'more like' reading of *like*, which can still be subsumed under its standard meaning 'somewhat resembling'. In this reading, it is still related to its old core use of comparison and can be interpreted as a signal of imperfect rendering of what the speaker actually intended to express, an epistemic hedge (on the notion of hedge, see e.g. Lakoff (1972), House and Kasper (1981), Brown and Levinson (1987), Holmes (1984)). *Like* signals the listener not to take the utterance too literally and to be aware of the discrepancy between what the speakers have in mind and what they actually utter. Schourup (1982a:32) underlies this claim by giving evidence for the use of LIKE[10] as a comparative item, and as what he calls 'evincive', from languages such as Sierra Miwok, Lahu, and Raluana. This seems to be supportive cross-linguistic evidence for the grammaticalization channel linking comparative items and discourse markers, as traced for Standard English by Romaine and Lange (1992), and for *olsem* in Bislama by Meyerhoff and Niedzielski (1998, 1995). Consider the following example:

(5) M. If someone slips on the ice outside a building, (.)
they could almost sue the architect for not having put ice-melting=
=equipment in the sidewalk.
X. yeah,
into the sidewalk **like** (.) heaters.
but then…

X uses *heaters* as an inexact representation of an ice-melting device. Knowing that it is not the exact term, she employs it as a substitute for the lexical item (if there is any) she does not know or does not have in her immediate active word stock. *Like* as an epistemic hedge does not fully commit the speaker to the content of what she says[11]. In Underhill's words (1988:241) she 'leaves the statement slightly open', because openly stating her uncertainty would be a threat to her positive face[12].

Berlin (1992) argues that some entities are more representative, more focal than others, especially when categories are fuzzy. This is in accordance with Rosch's (1975, 1978) prototype theory, which holds that human categorization is not arbitrary or accidental but rather the result of psychological principles of categorization. In ex (5), *heaters* is not arbitrarily chosen but rather is a focal member of the category. It is more cognitively salient than other possibilities and is thus more prone to be chosen given the time constraints of talk-in-interaction. Note that the comparative 'similar to' meaning plays extensively in the function of *like* in these contexts, as this is exactly the relation of a prototype and its less prototypical, specific instantiation of the category.

The hedging via *like* in situations where prototypicality is involved can be very nicely seen with numerical expressions. Rosch (1975:533) claims that natural categories such as numbers have reference points, or 'anchoring points', in relation to which other stimuli are perceived and classified. Consider the following exchange:

(6) A. and what did he discover ?
X. well
he's still in the process of being discovered.
what he was discovering
he discovered (.) higher **like** millions of ( )

Like has the pragmatic implicature of 'for example'[13]. Its effect as a linguistic hedge before the numerical expression is to metaphorically signal the slight deviance from the intended meaning to the reference point, the prototypical *millions*. *Millions* can be understood as a prototype for 'a lot'. As it is a multiple of 1,000,000, a salient number in the decimal system, it provides 'a cognitive focus of [the] human-processing mechanism(s)' (Berlin 1992). The choice of the prototype in place of a non-focal member is not random but because it is a conceptually easily accessible classificatory item. *Like* has the interpersonal function of a pragmatic hedge, it marks the lexical choice as approximate and gives the speaker reduced responsibility.

3.2 From a comparative to a filler

As an extension of its 'more like', 'so to speak' sense, *like* becomes what has been called 'hesitative' or 'pausal filler', a use which has been most criticized by normativists and has been identified with slang or very casual speech (Schourup 1982a:39). Contrary to discourse markers like *oh* and *well*, *like* in this function is not an initial marker, it typically precedes afterthought modifications by speakers who want to continue their utterance but have difficulties formulating it. Current discourse analytic research (Fox and Jesperson 1995, Schegloff 1996) indeed shows that speakers plan ahead while it is not their turn and then jump in and claim the floor without having properly planned ahead their whole turn. As a result, problems can arise when the utterance is in the middle of production.

In my data, *like* in this use often precedes a restart or an anacoluthon.[14]. *Like* fills this pause, or part of it, and thus enables the speaker to hold the floor by filling in the silence or to signal that there is more

to come. By indicating that what follows is only an approximative rendering, the pause is 'detoxified' (Schourup 1982a: 46). Let me exemplify this use of *like* in the following example:

(7) C.K. So what else do you have apart from history,
X. I have I take(.) um I'm taking math (.) and it's like it's called=
=Sequential Bias (.) which (.),
next year I take Precalculus.

Like occurs at the point where X hesitates several times and fills one potential pause with the filler *like*. I argue that *like* here has about the same function as the discourse marker *um* a little before, a 'sound shadow' (Goffman 1981:109) to hold the floor.

The comparative approximate semantics of the source item make it an ideal word for the filling function because in claiming that something is in a way 'similar to' or 'in the same way as something', the speaker does not add much additional information to what he or she is saying. And, as *like*'s propositional meaning has become semantically bleached (Lehmann (1985), Romaine and Lange (1991), Sankoff et al. (1997)), it is the perfect particle to fill a pause, and to hold the floor.

3.3 From comparison/approximation to focus

In the literature, *like* is often interpreted as a focus marker. Underhill (1988) defines focus as the 'most significant information in a sentence' (cf. Kuno 1980:126). The presentation of new or newly focused on information can trigger problems of formulation. A marker with an approximative function, and especially one that is already semantically heavily bleached, seems an ideal particle to introduce focused material - marking it as such while giving the speaker time to mentally prepare his following speech. The next example shows how *like* can be interpreted as a focusing item of a stereotyped notion. It precedes a stretch of speech, the content of which is a typical situation, the story of someone who suddenly becomes rich and famous.

(8) Talking about a man coming from India to England:
X. and he was **like** put up in a house,
Cambridge and everything,
was just amazing.

Because the story is a well-known motif, X marks it as that: the typical success story. *Like* in this context could be interpreted as hesitative or hedging. This would in turn be underlined by the fact that the speaker does not attempt an elaborate expression of her thoughts - marked by *and everything*. But intonation suggests otherwise. Because the speaker utters what follows *like* in a monotonous, dragging voice, I interpret *like* as focusing. Focus can mark material that is not common ground such as unusual notions. In this case it can be interpreted as drawing the addressee's attention to a stereotype (Schourup 1982). Note that as X only gives an approximate rendering of the story, *like* still retains some of its core comparative function in the sense that this instance is compared to and seen as one instance of the typical success story. In fact, I have not come across any instance of *like* where it can be interpreted purely as a focusing item without any approximative or comparative implication.

This use of *like* is quotation-near, in that the speaker uses prefabricated ideas or even parts of speech she has heard or read before, embedding them into personal narration from her perspective. *Like* sets off parts of speech the speaker cannot claim responsibility for, here a sort of indirect quote of a stereotype. This patchwork of chunks of speech of various authors and 'voices' creates a speech mosaic[15]. As I will exemplify in the next section, with *like* used as a quotative complementizer, the speaker can mark the borrowed part as second-hand, as a sort of reported speech.

4. *Like* as a quotative

4.1. From a comparison to a quotative

Syntactically, *like* can occupy a slot before a clause (as a preposition) or a sentence (as a conjunction). If it precedes a quotation, it can assume the syntactic function of an introductory item for reported speech. In Standard English, a quotation is usually preceded by a quotation frame (even though in actual speech there are a great number of cases where quoted speech occurs without a frame, cf. Romaine and Lange's (1991:235) 'bald', 'unframed', or 'unbracketed' reporting, also Mathis and Yule 1994).

In these cases, *like* cannot be analyzed as a discourse marker in the sense in which I have used it so far, as it does not fulfil the requirement that it be (Schiffrin 1987:31-32) 'sequentially dependent element(s) [...] *independent of sentence structure*' [emphasis mine]; yet in another, very explicit way, it is literally used to mark discourse. *Like*, here, has a clearly defined function: to introduce reported speech. It can be analyzed as a variant of quotative verbs such as *to say*, and *to go*, with which it can co-occur.

The mental salience of the link COMPARATIVE MARKER - QUOTATIVE COMPLEMENTIZER is underlined by the fact that Sankoff et al. (1997:205) found a parallel to the use of *like* as a quotative complement in the speech habits of young bilingual Canadians, who have a tendency to use *comme* - quite contrary to its use in standard continental French - as a quotative complementizer. In other words, the new function of *like* seems to be so cognitively and functionally salient that the pattern is even transferred from one language into the other. Furthermore, the salience of this pattern is backed further by Schourup's (1982a:33-34) and Meyerhoff and Niedzielski's (1998, 1995) findings that in a number of languages the cognate equivalents of *like* have become discourse introductory items. There thus seems to be cross-linguistic evidence for a functional correspondence between the functions of this marker (a point developed further by Güldemann 2001).

4.2 Like and speaker roles

Each of the quotative introductory verbs has a pragmatic effect that enables the speakers to express and modify their attitude towards the quote. The most neutral verb is 'to say', which merely reports without any special connotation. *Be like* can function in very much the same way in reported speech, as is shown in the following example:

(9)→ X. he usually (.) walks into class (.) and **says**,
'this is Stuyvesant (.)'.
that's it (.).
ah 'this is Stuyvesant (.).
this is not (.) Washington or Wayne',
.....
→ and he's **like** 'Stuyvesant (.).
[changed voice][16]
and the most important thing in my class is maturity.'
→ and then he **says** he **says** to me....

Here, the speaker alternates *be like* and *say*. Both can be interpreted as straightforward quotation frames and in a superficial account of the utterance, they seem interchangeable. (I will come to the significant pragmatic difference later).

Romaine and Lange claim that the alternation of *be like* and other introducers demarcates different speakers. Blyth et al. rarely found any third person subjects with *like* in their data (1990:21). These findings cannot be confirmed with my data. Consider the above example, where both *say* and *be like*

are used with the same 3rd P.SING. In my data, speakers used *be like* with 1st P. SING, 3rd P. SING, and 3rd P. PL. In quoting whole dialogues speakers often introduce their own speech as well as that of other interlocutors with *like*.

(10) X. She's **like** ' it's a little sexist'.
I'm **like** 'a ↑little sexist ?'

Thus, in the above example, as in many others in my data, *like* was not used as a device to demarcate different speakers. Neither was there any aversion to the use of *like* with 3rd P.SING. As can be observed in (11), X. uses *like* for two different 3rd P.SING. Confusion does not arise because the pronouns show which person is speaking, a *be like –say* alternation to demarcate speaker roles might be an additional, redundant device to differentiate them.

(11) X. And so he'll be like telling the whole of us something from the Bible=
=and she's **like** 'Mr R. that wasn't in the book (.).
Mr. R there's nothing in the Bible that says anything like that',
.....
He's **like** 'it's a limited edition'.
.....
She's **li]ke**
Others] laugh]
X.] 'is it is it ?'

Thus, *be like* in my data can be a quotative complementizer without any distributional constraints concerning the person of the subject. Blyth et al.'s (1990) and Romaine and Lange's (1991) findings that *like* is used to demarcate or differentiate speaker roles are not supported by my material, where it seems to have been generalized to all persons (cf. Ferrara and Bell (1995) for similar results). This shows the speed with which *like* has spread since the first accounts of its grammaticalization as a complementizer in the late 80s. My data, then, can be seen as supportive of a generalization and a loss of selectional restrictions of *like*

4.3 *Like* and reported speech and thought

Before its grammaticalization, one of *like's* meaning was that of a comparative preposition. Because of this still more or less inherent semantic property and because of the possibility of a 'for example' and 'as if' reading, *like* can be used to present imaginary discourse as if it took place. As Ferrara and Bell (1995:279) pointed out, a clear boundary between speech and thought is hard to draw, especially for first person, it is often impossible to distinguish thought from actual speech. The quote's status as verbal or non-verbal is completely left open: it is more the speaker's attitude or opinion that is expressed in the form of reported speech. This sounds a lot like Goffman's (1981) so-called response cries, which are used to 'show or index the mental state of the transmitters'. Sometimes whole quotations can functions as indexes of inner states, used to 'clarify the drama of their [speakers] circumstances'. It does not really make any difference if the quoted material was actually uttered or if it was inner monologue, cf. Chafe's (1994) 'verbally uncommitted thought'.

Like, with its comparative semantics, is the ideal item to frame direct speech and inner monologue. Consider (12) below:

(12) X. So basically (.) I've skipped (.) I didn't realize this but I've skipped a=
=class. (.)
in my placing.
I didn't know this and I'm so I was **like** 'oh well hehh geez this is things' ,
you know,

X does not make it explicit if the quotation was uttered or not. It could well have been, but considering the very approximative nature of the speech act, and the fact that *oh well* is something like a conventional verbal marker for resignation, a kind of verbal shrug, it need not be the case. Romaine and Lange (1991:227) make the point that by using *like* the speaker invites the listener to infer that this is what the speaker was thinking OR saying at this very moment[17]. It is more the expressive content of the speech act or her thoughts rather than the exact words that are reported. The use of *you know* underlines this interpretation. X assumes that her interlocutors share the same code of expression, namely using *oh well* for the conventional situation of accepting one's fate, and checks this by using *you know*, thus appealing to common ground[18] (Schiffrin 1987).

In using *like* as a quotative introductory item, speakers sidestep the problem of where thought begins and where speech ends by presenting the quote as if it had taken place without committing themselves to its actual utterance. 'Discourse introduced by *like* blurs the boundaries between direct and indirect representation of both speech and thought report' (Romaine and Lange 1991:234).

I claim that *like*, as in the above example, precedes internal comments on the situation that can be given in this short form without having to give external evaluation (Labov 1972). X's speech is inward, a verbalization of what she thought at that moment.[19]

In my data, as shown in the above example, *like* precedes direct speech and internal thought and is used in both cases equally and in quick succession. As English has a great variety of introductory verbs for either thought or speech[20], it is all the more noteworthy that these verbs are increasingly replaced in favor of one single introducer.

4.4 *Like* as a hedging/approximative quotative

There are examples to be found where the context makes it clear that the reported speech introduced by *like* was actually uttered, as in the above example in line 01. These are quotes by 3rd person speakers that contain information necessary to the progression of the narrative. Speakers report the utterance but its form and content can only be rendered very approximately, because of the idiosyncrasy of expression in terms of accent, style, prosody etc. Tannen (1986a) takes into account that any attempt to imitate an idiolect cannot be more than an approximative reconstruction and calls what I have labeled 'reported speech' 'CONSTRUCTED DIALOGUE' (cf. also Fleischman and Yaguello's 'interpretative quotative' (to appear: 9)). As the reporting speaker cannot, due to her imperfect memory of the original utterance and due to her personal limitations concerning voice quality, pitch etc., give an exact rendering of the features of the original speech act, she uses *like*, which, given its approximative semantics, does not commit her to the form and the content of the quotation. As mentioned in 4.3, the speaker does not even state if the speech act ever took place. With *like* used for embedded evaluation, the vividness and directness of direct speech is retained, while giving the speaker only reduced responsibility for the quoted material. This parallels Fleischman and Yaguello's (to appear) statement that the reduced speaker liability brings quotations with *like* into the realm of indirect speech.

(13) 01 X. and the teacher's **like** 'well I don't know,
02 and like and so she's **like** ah she's **like** 'I don't know if that's true or not'.
03 and I was **like** I raised my hand and I was **like** '↑monde. (.)
04 monde means monde means world in French'.
→ 05 and she was **like** 'still and an:: (.)' you know whatever.

After having begun the quotation, X does not continue it. She does not perfectly recall the reply of the teacher, an interpretation that is underlined by the lengthening of *an.::* and the short pause which are both symptomatic of a short word search, which is then given up as the speaker decides not to render the quote verbatim. The discourse markers *you know* and *whatever* are a sign of inability and perhaps also of unwillingness to continue the reported speech[21].

Consider the next example: Here, the speaker talks about a transfer of shares that took place. The shares were sold for a very high price but the next day they had significantly dropped in value. She makes this fact explicit by including a little imaginary selling scene where the seller is trying to get rid of his nearly worthless shares.

(14) Talking about Wall Street
X. And they sold him for a very high price and they anh=
=the next day it's **like** ' two cents a sha::::re two cents a sha:::re'.
[changed voice]

The quotation introduced by *like* is purely approximative, an implication which is underlined by the use of *it's like* instead of *he's like*. The impersonal form shows that the quote is an illustrative example of what a hypothetical person could say or could have said in this situation. Ferrara and Bell (1995:278) point out that the impersonal construction is mainly used to report collective thoughts of a group or the habitual style of thought or speech for one individual. The quotation therefore cannot be called reported speech, because it has not come out of a real situation. It is purely imaginative, CONSTRUCTED DIALOGUE (Tannen 1986a) in its proper sense.

4.5 *Like* precedes non-lexical sounds, onomatopoeic expressions, stereotyped lexicalized sounds that express feelings, or non-verbal signs

In my data, a very striking phenomenon is the association of quotative *like* with sounds, prosodic and paralinguistic devices, gestures or mimicry (cf. Kendon's 'quotable gestures' (1996, 1994)).[22] An explanation for this phenomenon proposed by Romaine and Lange (1991) is that those sounds and movements cannot be embedded into indirect speech and therefore are best rendered by a construction such as *like* introducing direct speech. Güldemann (2001) traces a scenario whereby mimesis markers first are introducers of onomatopoetic elements, or gestures, and only then occur as quotative verbs. They only encroach upon this function later and via the most mimetic category, direct reported discourse, where they can become routinized.

Let me illustrate this by example (15) taken from ex. (16), which sounds more idiomatic when introduced by *like* than by *say* (and it is completely ungrammatical when rendered as indirect speech):

(15) a) I was like 'wow.'
b) I said 'wow'.
c) *I said that 'wow.'[23]

The observation that *like* is an item heavily used for introducing interjections goes along with the focusing effect some researchers claim it to have. In using *like* and a quote that consists of interjections, the speakers perform the narrative rather than simply tell it. This is in order to simulate the feelings and the setting at the time of the quote and to make it as vivid as possible (cf. Blyth et al. 1991:222)[24].

Like is a marker of direct speech and it is preponderantly used to introduce typical features of oral style such as the ones mentioned above. Like in a radio-play, a whole auditory scenario is built up in order to involve the interlocutor by being as expressive as possible. This emotion-based rather than factual mode of rendering reveals how the speakers felt in and perceived the situation. Speech with these characteristics has been called 'involved style' by Wolfson (1982), 'performed narrative' by Tannen (1989) and 'replaying' by Goffman (1981).

The content of the quotation can only be an approximative rendering of the whole emotional and contextual situation (note the persistence of *like*'s comparative/approximative semantics) but it has a much stronger expressive impact than a mere word-for-word articulation of what has happened[25]. As my data shows, this expressiveness and approximation are often revealed by the choice of *like* as a

quotative complementizer in contrast to the neutral, matter-of-fact *say*, which is more useful for expressing objective facts. Consider also the next example:

(16) 01 X. it was really great so,
02 and I loved my teachers so it was **like** 'wow'.
03 now.
04 this year it's just **like**-

The *wow* in line 2 is a conventionalized sound for positive amazement. As noted, it cannot be put into indirect speech and its expressive content makes it a typical item for direct quotation because it bears the connotation of immediateness and a close link to the situational context of the utterance. The second *like* very probably introduces a shrug or another non-verbal sign that expresses feelings differently but maybe even more precisely than words. I interpret the quote as framing a non-verbal sign because no utterance followed after the opening of the quotation frame in line 04, and because nobody of the present interlocutors claimed the floor at the transition relevance point.

4.6 *Like* precedes an imitation and/or changed voice or speech style

Consider ex. (17), where the speech of the teacher is imitated throughout the quote:

(17) X. cause he's **like** you know 'in my class I'm or↑iginal,
I give all kinds of fun::::: work'.
[changed voice]

X changes her voice to a tone that comes near the one of the teacher and tries to mock his prosody. The imitation adds to the content of the speech act and has to be considered part of the quote. Let us consider example (18):

(18) X. he usually (.) walks into class (.) and says,
'this is Stuyvesant (.)' .
that's it (_).
ah 'this is Stuyvesant (.).
this is not (.) Washington or Wayne',
.....
and he's **like** 'Stuyvesant (.).
[rhythmical clapping]
and the most important thing in my class is maturity'.
and then he says he says to me....

Here, too, the non-verbal sounds of the quote contribute to its impact. A mere quoting of the verbal utterance would not get across the whole expressive content, which is the sum of words AND sounds. We do not know if the teacher was really clapping or not. If he was, X. wants to express it because she considers it to be important to illustrate the way he is. If he was not, X. has probably inserted the clapping sound in order to add an important feature of his characteristic behavior that the listeners would not understand through the mere words he was saying. This could be militariness, insistence, or other negative features.

In the above examples, the quotation introduced by *like* contains not only additional non-lexical sounds but imitation sequences in order to make the utterance more illustrative, immediate, or appealing. Because one person takes all the roles, all characteristics, emotions, and motivations otherwise conveyed by the facial expression, typical tone of voice, or gestures of several interlocutors have to be rendered by the one narrator. In order to differentiate and to give a personal touch to the

utterances of the several speakers, their particular manner of speaking is imitated. The speaker roles are thus over-amplified by taking up their prosody melody etc. If we consider ex. (10) again, we can see that X. is imitating her own voice and the prosody she had used at the specific moment of the original utterance in order to signal astonishment and outrage. The same phenomenon can be seen in ex (14). Here, X tries to imitate the strategies of a stockbroker who is trying to sell shares. Even though she does not imitate any utterance she actually heard, she still adds to the propositional content by lending her imagined figure a loud, dragging voice creating a specific ambiance and profile for the supposed speaker.

In conclusion, speakers want to transfer more than just the words of the quotation when reporting events. They aim to bring across the ambiance and what the speaker might have felt at the moment of talk. Thus, *like* introduces more than just speech, it introduces whole performances, what Romaine and Lange (1991) call EMBEDDED EVALUATION. In reporting more than mere words, but also the feeling, gestures, and motivations of the speaker, the quoting speaker conveys additional information inside the quotation frame instead of having to step out of it and having to start a different construction for comments, motivation, etc.

In this respect *like* can function as a floor-holding device[16]. A speaker can present his utterance as a stretch of talk with changing speaker roles, like in a radio-play. Nordberg (1984:20) has shown that such enacting captures the attention of the listeners much more than a long monologue of indirect incorporated speech. The use of *be like* as a quotative complement lets the narrator stay in his own perspective. He acts as a moderator and presents the multiperspectives of single speakers whom he lets talk as if for themselves.

5. Proposed semantic field

Romaine and Lange's (1991) grammaticalization model concentrates on *like*'s syntactic development and tries to link it with semantic-pragmatic facts. They account for the co-occurrence of the uses of *like* and for the fact that its development is not strictly sequential by postulating a branching model. A 'linear model of grammaticalization is inadequate to account for these developments.' (1991:262). As I have shown throughout this paper, *like* is multifunctional and its meanings are often ambiguous e.g. between a hedge and a focusing item, or between a focus marker and a quotative as in (8). Romaine and Lange (1991:245) very lucidly point out that "the meanings of 'approximative' and 'similarity' as well as the focus function have contributed to both the discourse introductory and the discourse marker uses of *like*". And they claim that a semantic core model might fit best to explain the status quo of *like* in synchrony.

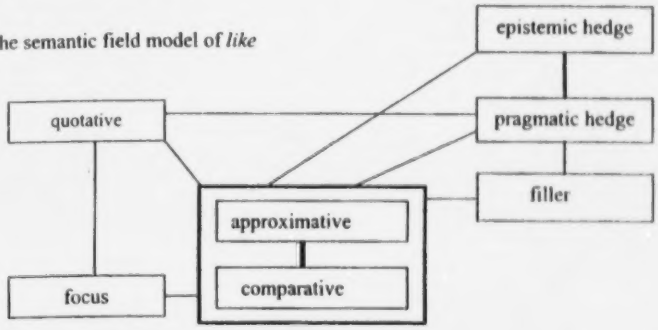
As I have shown above, a grammaticalization channel (Heine and Traugott 1991) does not show how the synchronically co-existing meanings overlap and reinforce each other. A channel model, even a branching one, does not account for this fact particularly well because it does not explain overlapping and ambiguity of meaning between functions at opposite ends of the channel. I have tried to show that with *like* functions such as the quotative complement and the discourse marker do overlap.

Furthermore, as has been shown in this paper, all uses of *like* still have a semantic trait of comparison/approximation. A channel suggests a suppletive development, at least in the larger diachronic perspective, when, in fact, we find persistence of meaning[17]. The fact that all the uses of *like* co-exist calls for an investigation of the status quo. Fleischman and Yaguello (to appear) propose a multiple pathway model, which reduces one problem inherent in a step-by-step pathway as it shows the close link to the comparative meaning in the metaphorically extended functions. But they nevertheless do not account for the inter-relatedness and ambiguity of the grammaticalized uses of *like* amongst themselves.

Following Lakoff's (1987) radial structure model, I offer a synchronic chart that shows how the superficially messy facts can be linked in an orderly way. Behind the overlappings and ambiguities that result from *like*'s multifunctionality lies an interrelated net of semantic-pragmatic pathways that I

will show to be cross-linguistically sustained. Figure 2 is a representation of the synsemantic field of *like* with its core semantic-pragmatic meaning in the center and the functional extensions linked both with the core as well as amongst themselves.[28]

Figure 2: The semantic field model of *like*



For historical reasons, and because it is the persistent semantic trait, I assume as the basic core meaning of *like* the notion of comparison. This gives rise to various other, related meanings that can also be considered as interrelated amongst themselves and which still contain its core semantic meaning to a greater or lesser degree.[29] The comparative core meaning of *like* is very closely related to its approximative semantics. I have shown in example (5) how its purely comparative meaning can give rise to a comparison which is more like a 'loose fit' (Schourup 1982a) between the two compared pieces of talk, or between an item that is seen as a more prototypical example and between something more specific. The semantic path is one that moves from a 'similar' to a 'somewhat resembling' meaning. I take *like*'s comparative and approximative functions to be closely tied as their semantics overlap a great deal and as they are even harder to disentangle than the other, more distantly related uses of *like*. Thus, I interpret the core meaning of *like* to be comparative/approximative.

As Haiman (1989:310) puts it 'the comparative construction is one which contrasts, and hence focuses the elements which are compared... the element compared being more highlighted'. In other words, the semantic link between comparing and focusing seems to be a fairly salient one.

Given the fact that *like* can signal approximation and loose comparison, and still reflect this propositional content of 'similar to'. I suggest that this looseness of fit can be interpreted on the propositional level as an epistemic hedge. That is a signal of this loose fit between two items compared. (This was also seen in ex (6)). Sweetser (1990:28) points out the frequent link between items that signal physical likeness and epistemic stances; the path from comparison to a hedge of epistemic uncertainty seems to be a well-trodden one cross-linguistically (I will return to this point in discussing the comparative chart below in figure 2). When *like* is transferred to an interpersonal, affective level, one can reinterpret it as a pragmatic hedge. The difference here is that *like* is used as a face-saving device[30].

As shown in e.g. (7), the comparative 'similar to' semantics of *like* make it an ideal filling item in case formulating problems arise. In saying that something is *like* something else, the speaker can be heard filling a pause. I assume *like* in its filling function to be an extension of its pragmatic hedging function. It works on the interpersonal level, as a floor-holding device, and as a signal of production problems. Not only does it provide lexical material to fill the pause that might threaten the speaker's claim to the floor but it also shows that one is not quite happy with the lexical choices one had to make due to time constraint.

The link between focus marker and quotative complementizer can be explained by the fact that, as has been pointed out before, quotations are very often the most focused part of an utterance as they display immediacy and interpersonal involvement. In the case of *like* as a quotative introducer, the reported

elements are often approximative in nature in that they are either constructed dialogue or it does not become clear if they were actually uttered or not. Thus they are not merely reports of speech acts but what Fleischman and Yaguello (to appear:13) have called 'paradigmatic exemplars: one statement among others, similar in form and content, that could be produced in the circumstances in question'. Here, the link to *like*'s comparative core meaning is evident, as in ex (14) [31]. *Like*, given its approximative semantics, does not commit the speaker to the form and the content of the quotation. It functions as a hedge both on the referential and on the interpersonal level, as the speaker retains a reduced responsibility with respect to what was said and how.

Romaine and Lange's (1991) linear model of a semantic pathway has been recast here as a network of relations. This model has been inspired both by the findings of Lakoff's (1987) work and by the fact that Traugott (1998) postulated that grammaticalization paths are not always unidirectional. Meyerhoff and Niedzielski (1998, 1995) conclude that a similar model most adequately represents the grammaticalization of *olsem* meaning 'be like' in Bislama. Güldemann (2001) claims that, especially in the field of quotative verbs, the current unidirectional grammaticalization accounts should be challenged.

The links between the synchronically co-occurring and often overlapping uses of *like* are metaphorical and metonymical extensions from one common comparative/approximative core and conventionalizations of conversational implicatures. They extended to a network of relations. The diverse functions that *like* has assumed synchronically are motivated by this model - they cannot be predicted but they are explained.

The new uses of *like* are spreading sociolinguistically, as Ferrara and Bell's (1995) study shows. As the older uses still persist in the language, we can assume that the development is additive rather than suppletive. A clear-cut linear grammaticalization path, such as the ones postulated by Heine and Traugott (1991), Heine, Claudi, and Hünnemeyer (1991), and Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994), where functions and meanings supplant each other, cannot explain the synchronic facts. Only a semantic field model is able to cope with the linguistic reality and explain the co-existence of various instantiations centering around and linked by a core meaning. In accordance with Hopper's (1991) principle of persistence of meaning, the semantic core meaning of comparison/approximation is still present in all the derived uses which are linked to each other in various ways.[32]

The value of these claims is underlined by much cross-linguistic evidence. There appears to be a cognitive/perceptually salient pragmatic-semantic link between the functions outlined above such as hedge, quotative, focus etc. and the core-meaning of comparison. If source-items in two or more different languages, especially languages that are unrelated such as English and Thai, follow parallel paths of development without any evident contact, this supports the assumption that there is a general link between the notion of comparison and its derived functions. Hence, Traugott (1995) asks if one can make cross-linguistic generalizations about the development of discourse particles both in terms of their semantic sources and their semantic-pragmatic paths. (Consider also Mosegaard Hansen (1998:85) who points out that, synchronically and diachronically, discourse markers can be traced back to a number of related uses and that in their development they have usually changed word class).

Studies like Fleischman and Yaguello (to appear), Meyerhoff and Niedzielski (1998, 1995) and this present paper reinforce this claim and show that there are cross-linguistic parallels between the source items and the outcome of such semantic-pragmatic developments. Let me demonstrate this with a table of findings from other languages[33].

Table 1: Cross-linguistic distribution of LIKE lexemes

	approximative	comparison	reported speech	reported thought	focus	hedge	filler
lish *like*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
ıma *olsem*	x	x	x	x	x	x	
nese *nanka*	x	x	x	x	(x)	x	x
ch *genre*	x	x	x	x	x	x	?
ese *xiang*		x	x	x	x	x	
ıg	??	(na) be	(na) be	(na) be	??	be	??
bæ:p	x		(x)	x	x	x	x

This table[34] provides more cross-linguistic evidence for a close semantic link between the notion of approximation, hedging, focusing, and introducing of discourse. It has often been claimed that discourse markers are highly language specific items (Mosegaard Hansen 1995, Brinton 1996), hard to translate, and only understandable within their specific linguistic system. But Table 1 shows that similar lexical items in unrelated languages are generalized to serve discourse functions. This means that the claims about specificity and untranslatability of discourse particles can be relaxed. I have tried to show that multiple discourse functions within the same related field are quite widespread among unrelated languages. This is highly suggestive of a universal semantic field lying behind such coherent findings.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that the boundaries of the different functions of *like* are very hard to determine and its interpretation depends heavily on the context. I do not think that it is always possible to subcategorize them in the current state of research. The interpretation does rely heavily on the situation, the chosen prosody, speaker intention, and on hearer reception. Interpretations must necessarily be subjective.

I have attempted to demonstrate that a unidirectional grammaticalization model may not be the best way to capture the synchronic multifunctionality of *like*. This fact is best captured by a radial structure model first introduced by Lakoff (1987), which allows for one core meaning with metaphorical and metonymic extensions more or less closely linked amongst themselves while retaining their original core function.

Sociolinguistic research backs the claim that we cannot postulate a channel with obsolete uses at one end and new ones at the other end. Rather, the old uses persist with the new ones becoming more and more widespread. As I have shown in this paper, and as Ferrara and Bell's (1995) study underlines, *like* as a quotative has now been generalized for young American English speakers and is used with all grammatical persons and for both internal thought and direct speech. The speed of grammaticalization and its obvious close interaction with the syntactic system are a matter of great interest for future research: we can continue to look at the development of *like* as the generation that uses this item for preference grows older.

[34]

Appendix:

Transcription conventions

carriage return	intonation unit
[ ]	overlap
=	quick, immediate connection of new turns or single units
(.)	micro-pause
(-), (--)	short, middle pause
::::	lengthening, according to its duration
?	high rise, appeal intonation
,	mid rise, continuing intonation
.	low fall, final intonation
( )	unintelligible passage, according to its duration
accent	primary or main accent
!ac!cent	extra strong accent
↑	pitch step up
↓	pitch step down
' '	signals for start and end of quote

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Notes:

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[2] This priming effect was found more generally by Tannen (1987), who showed that speakers are more likely to use a word that has already occurred in a conversation than a completely 'new' one.

[3] As Blyth et al (1990:223) have shown that in their data, *like* was only used by speakers UNDER 38. A follow-up study by Ferrara and Bell in 1995 found out that the oldest speaker that actually used it as a discourse marker was 39 (!!)'

[4] This article focuses on the use of *like* in American English. While its use in other varieties is attested (Macaulay 2001 for Scottish English, Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999) and Miller and Weinert (1995) for British English), I do not claim that my findings can necessarily be generalized. Further research will show if universal tendencies can be postulated with respect to *like*'s functions across varieties.

[5] Discourse markers have been commonly classified as particles drawn from a heterogeneous group of functional classes that are stylistically stigmatized, short, unstressed, optional items that do not affect the truth value of a sentence and do not contribute to propositional content. Their occurrence is a typical feature of oral style where they have to be interpreted on a global level as they have textual and interpersonal function, cf.Kroon (1995), Schiffrin (1987) .

[6] In the discourse marker use, *like* is semantically the most bleached and syntactically the most variable.

[7] The fact that it co-occurs with a verb of saying led to its classification as a complementizer (cf. fig 1). Mostly, though, it nowadays accompanies the semantically empty 'dummy verb' *to be* (cf. Romaine and Lange 1991).

[8] One has to bear in mind that my data represents the speech habits of a few persons during a very limited stretch of time rather than being representative of the use of *like* in spoken language in general (for *like's* quantitative sociolinguistic distribution see Romaine and Lange (1991), Ferrara and Bell (1995), Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999)).

[9] The transcription conventions I have used are given as an appendix to this paper.

[10] In this paper, I use the convention of marking the lexeme in SMALL CAPITALS and the English word *like* in *italics*.

[11] I am grateful to Keira Ballantyne for pointing out to me that, in some cases, speakers are reluctant to put in exact technical terms even if they know them because the assertion of in-field knowledge would put them in the position of claiming knowledge of a field that they might be unwilling to take on.

[12] For the notion of face see e.g. Brown and Levinson (1987), Holmes (1992).

[13] Schourup (1982a:37) paraphrases this as 'What I say is <u>like</u> what I mean'.

[14] This finding is underlined by Andersen et al.'s (1999:1339) claim that discourse markers signal production problems.

[15] This problem of speaker commitment to quotes that have become stereotypes or somehow 'common goods' has been commented on by many scholars, see especially Flaubert in his 'Dictionnaire des

idées reçues' (1966) and its fictional counterpart 'Bouvard et Pécuchet' (1966), and by Bakhtin (1986). Goffman (1981) talks about 'lamination'.

[16] I have used little asterisks to add additional prosodic or extralinguistic information about the utterance. Here they mark a changed voice. In the following examples, I will continue to mark extralinguistic sounds and marked pitch or prosody by asterisks and add the quality of additional information in square brackets.

[17] I follow Ferrara and Bell (1995), who take into account that the area between speech and thought is quite fuzzy by the use of the expression 'reported discourse' rather than 'reported speech'.

[18] This interpretation is underlined by the rising intonation of *you know*, which I interpret as an appeal for back-channel (cf. Holmes' 1986:10 classification as 'appeal for reassurance')

[19] Ferrara and Bell (1995) claim that the function of *like* in contexts such as the above is a substitution of the now obsolete soliloquy, as it gives speakers the possibility to open up their internal worlds to the public.

[20] Cross-linguistically, the marking of indirect speech and thought is done via functional devices such as the irrealis mode, evidentials, aspect markers ect.

[21] I interpret this *whatever* (and the *you know* preceding it) to be outside the quotation frame, a comment of X external to the quote. It is used as a signal for the listener that she does not fully remember the exact form or/and that the rest of the quotation is too unimportant to be reported.

[22] This parallels the use of quotative *go* (Butters 1980). Consider also the new use of *all* in American English as in *She was all '...'*, which seems to parallel the use of *like* as a quotative complementizer for token mimicry, sound effects etc.

[23] cf. Schourup's (1982 b) footnote that *go* and *like* serve the important function of distinguishing the problematic ambiguity between direct and indirect quotes in English. As they can only occur with direct quotes, their spread in present-day verbal interaction might well be attributed to this very specific function.

[24] Labov (1972) and Chafe (1982) state that narratives are more vivid when direct speech is used to report dialogue.

[25] Note the obvious link to Goffman's (1981) 'response cries',which are used to show or index the mental state of the transmitters, to 'clarify the drama of their circumstances'. Thus the use of *like* and the response cries reveal the inner state and thereby create listener involvement.

[26] Note that this bears the possibility of the presentator's superimposing his attitude such as irony, animosity... on the quoted persons utterance (cf. Fleischmann and Yaguello to appear: 11 'dual voice utterances' and Mathis and Yule (1994) 'double voicing effect'. Consider also the close link to free indirect discourse.

[27] Even diachronically, the development of *like* does not proceed unilaterally along one chain of linked functions. The facts in the OED show that *like*'s grammaticalization cannot be modeled as a unidimensional outgrowth where one use develops into a new use and from there into the next one. Rather, the facts point to simultaneous development in several directions from one core meaning. According to the OED, like from adj *gelic* 'having the form of' developed in the 14th century 2 meanings: 'approximately' and 'as if'. In the 19th century there was another extension of meaning to 'for example' and 'as such'. The 20th century saw the development of the discourse marker and the

discourse introductory function (cf. also Meehan 1991). Consequently, a radial structure model, while prevalently a synchronic model, can also account for the fact that *like's* diachronic development is non-linear. More diachronic research in this field has to be done, though, before we are able to assert that the diachronic evolution of *like*'s semantic and pragmatic functions can be mapped onto this kind of model.

[28] Note that the model sketched here can only be a poor representation of the complex, multidimensional synsemantic field of *like* where functions overlap and are linked both with each other and the core meaning. Within the field, these links can be more or less tight, speakers can tighten or loosen them, or create new links (which would lead to the addition of functions within the field). Being bound to the representation on paper, the overlappings and links amongst *like's* functions were indicated with a few schematic lines.

[29] Note that this chart shows the synchronic semantic field of *like*.

[30] There typically is a certain amount of uncertainty about the functioning of a hedge on the interpersonal and the epistemic levels (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987). Meyerhoff and Niedzielski (1995:6) show a link between the two hedging functions concerning *olsem*.

[31] Meyerhoff and Niedzielski (1995:2) state that when *olsem* is used as a quotative complement, it is because it has acquired the function of a general marker of identity. The assertion is that the complement clause is an instantiation of the main clause state or action. Thus there is an identity, a 'literal instantiation of the event of the speaker talking'.

[32] Lichtenberk (1991:476) calls this heterosemy: 'where two or more meanings or functions that are historically related, in the sense for deriving from the same source, are carried by reflexes of the common source element that belong in different morphosyntactic categories'

[33] For an extensive cross-linguistic study on the link between items meaning 'like', quotative verbs, and various other domains see Güldemann (2001)

[34] For the information in this chart I am indebted to the following persons: Mie Hiramoto, Kazumi Yoshihara, Aaron Tsang, Sumittra Suraratdecha, Preena Kangkun, Gillian Sankoff, and Miriam Meyerhoff